

# Office of National Drug Control Policy

## Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse

### City of Boston, MA

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#### Profile of Drug Indicators

July 2000



ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse staff compiled this profile by using the most recent data available from open sources. The data presented are as accurate as the sources from which they were drawn. The information contained in this profile should not be used to rank or compare States or jurisdictions, due to differences in data collection and reporting methods.

## **Boston, MA**

The following profile contains information on demographics, political figures, programs, crime, drug use, drug trafficking, and enforcement statistics.

### **Demographics<sup>1</sup>**

- Population: 3,457,976
- Race/Ethnicity: 83% white; 7% black; 5% Hispanic; 5% other
- County: Suffolk

### **Politics<sup>2</sup>**

- Mayor: Thomas M. Menino
- Commissioner of Boston Police Department: Paul F. Evans

### **Programs/Initiatives**

- New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)<sup>3</sup>  
This HIDTA was designated in 1999 due in part to the high purity heroin found throughout New England and the criminal groups trafficking heroin and crack cocaine from New York to New England. The primary mission of this HIDTA is to target, investigate, and prosecute violent criminal offenders who are responsible for the distribution of high purity heroin, cocaine, and crack. One of the counties in Massachusetts that this HIDTA is responsible for is Suffolk County. Boston falls within Suffolk County.
- Executive Office of Weed and Seed<sup>4</sup>  
The Boston Weed and Seed site designed a drug task force, Operation Crackdown (OC), which addresses the community concern of drug dealing and use in the area. OC is designed to deal with the rising use and distribution of heroin and crack through the combined multi-agency resources of the Boston Police Department Drug Control Unit and the DEA. The primary goal of OC is to rid the target area of drug dealers and buyers through incarceration, eviction, or both.

### **Crime and Drug-Related Crime**

- From January to March 2000, there were 11 homicides reported to the Boston Police Department. In 1999 at this time, there were 6 homicides reported.<sup>5</sup>

Reported Part One Crimes, Boston, 1999-2000

	March 1999	March 2000	YTD 1999	YTD 2000	% Change YTD '99-'00
Homicide	2	6	6	11	83.0
Rape & attempted	24	31	79	75	-5.0
Robbery & attempted	186	198	550	607	10.0
Aggravated Assault	346	351	958	979	2.0
Burglary & attempted	265	329	736	905	23.0
Larceny & attempted	1,337	1,329	3,611	3,741	4.0
Vehicle theft & attempt.	522	599	1,526	1,739	14.0

- Preliminary data for 1999 show that there were a total of 35,078 index crime offenses known to the police in Boston during the entire year.<sup>6</sup>

#### Index Crime Offenses Known to Police, Boston, 1998-99 (Prelim.)

	1998	1999
Murder/Non-Negl. Manslaughter	34	31
Forcible Rape	356	337
Robbery	2,334	2,467
Aggravated Assault	4,703	4,428
Burglary	3,610	3,414
Larceny-theft	17,578	17,637
Motor Vehicle Theft	6,366	6,764

### Drugs

#### ➤ Cocaine and Crack

Arrest and lab statistics, as well as anecdotal reports, suggest that cocaine remains Boston's top illicit drug of abuse, with crack predominating. Cocaine is still heavily trafficked on the streets and HCl availability is slightly up, especially in Boston's outlying communities.<sup>7</sup>

In calendar year 1997, arrests by Boston police for cocaine and derivatives constituted 47% of all controlled substance arrests. This number is down from the previous year when it was 53%. The major traffickers of cocaine in Boston are Colombian, Dominican and Jamaican nationals.<sup>8</sup>

#### ➤ Heroin

Over the last five years, heroin has established itself in Boston and Massachusetts as second to cocaine. Heroin use has risen among younger adults most likely due to its easy obtainability, very low price, high purity, and favorable reputation compared with crack. In 1997, heroin arrests accounted for 27% of all drug arrests in Boston. This is an increase over 22% the year before. According to the DEA, most of the Boston heroin is transported from New York. The main route of heroin administration is smoking.<sup>9</sup> However, due to its high purity, new and younger users tend to snort heroin, and progression to injection is widely reported.<sup>10</sup>

#### ➤ Marijuana

Marijuana continues to be easily obtainable in the Boston metropolitan area. Surveys and focus groups indicate that its use among adolescents is common and approaching that of cigarettes. Arrests for marijuana rose from 21% of all Boston police drug arrests in calendar year 1996 to 26% in 1997. Adolescents in focus groups stated that the most common means of smoking marijuana were with bongos or blunts.<sup>11</sup>

#### ➤ Other Drugs

- The DEA states that methamphetamine availability is increasing in Massachusetts. Users are usually young adults and college students, especially those people who attend rave parties. While the likely source for methamphetamine in Massachusetts is California, there was a lab recently discovered in Gloucester, north of Boston. Despite this, methamphetamine use in Massachusetts is still low.<sup>12</sup>

- Reports of MDMA (Ecstasy) are increasing, mostly among youth and young adults at parties, clubs, and raves.<sup>13</sup>
- Ketamine is common in the club and rave scenes and is sometimes injected intramuscularly by younger, white, middle-class needle exchange clients.<sup>14</sup>
- Poison control calls in Boston involving GHB have increased dramatically. Heavy use of this drug has been reported in local clubs.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Pulse Check, Winter 1998<sup>16</sup>**

##### **Law Enforcement Report on Heroin**

<b>Boston, MA</b>	
Use	Variable, dependent on supply
Who's Using/ Change in Users	All populations in mid 20's to mid 30's
Prevalent Method of Use	Injection; Snorting (most common)
Drugs in Combination	
Who's Selling	On street level, variable; on wholesale level, Dominicans, Colombians also involved. Dominicans and Colombians also sell cocaine
Price/Purity	\$4-10 per bag (300 mg); 25-50% purity

##### **Law Enforcement Report on Cocaine/Crack**

<b>Boston, MA</b>	
Use	Stable
Who's Using/ Change in Users	All types of people; both males and females; mid 20's to mid 30's
Prevalent Method of Use	Smoking; Snorting
Drugs in Combination	Occasionally combined with heroin (rare)
Who's Selling	Anyone who can purchase a substantial amount; major distributors are Dominican; most selling occurs using beepers and cellular phones and is delivered (less street sales)
Price/Purity	\$40-100 per gram; variable purity but usually 50%+.

##### **Law Enforcement Report on Marijuana**

<b>Boston, MA</b>	
Use	Increase in late teen and early 20's use; stable in other populations
Who's Using/ Change in Users	All types of people; shift to younger users.
Drugs in Combination	
Who's Selling	High school students; Jamaicans; home growers; increase in those who grow their own selling
Price/Purity	Varies; increase in last 6 months

#### **Juveniles<sup>17</sup>**

- 38.2% of Boston high school students surveyed in 1999 reported using marijuana at least once in their lifetime.

#### Prevalence of Drug Use Among High School Students, Boston, 1999

	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Lifetime Marijuana Use	31.9	44.7	38.2
Current Marijuana Use	14.8	26.4	20.5
Lifetime Cocaine Use	1.8	5.7	3.8
Current Cocaine Use	0.8	3.5	2.1
Lifetime Inhalant Use	6.6	7.5	7.0
Current Inhalant Use	1.6	2.4	2.0
Lifetime Heroin Use	0.5	2.3	1.4
Lifetime Methamphetamine Use	2.4	3.6	3.1
Lifetime Illegal Steroid Use	1.1	3.7	2.5
Lifetime Injecting Illegal Drug Use	0.4	0.8	0.6
Tried Marijuana Before Age 13	4.9	14.1	9.4

#### Consequences of Use

- From January to June 1999, there were 1,857 ED (Emergency Department) cocaine mentions in Boston.<sup>18</sup>

#### Estimated Number of ED Drug Mentions, by Drug, Boston, January-June 1999

Cocaine	Heroin/Morphine	Marij./Hashish	Methamphetamine
1,857	1,385	1,055	9

- Heroin/Morphine was mentioned 202 times by Boston Medical Examiners (ME) in drug-related deaths during 1998.<sup>19</sup>

#### Estimated Number of ME Drug Mentions, by Drug, Boston, 1996-98

	1996	1997	1998
Cocaine	134	107	145
Heroin/Morphine	141	176	202
Marijuana/Hashish	--	1	1
Methadone	10	7	10
Methamphetamine	2	2	--

#### Enforcement

- As of October 31, 1998, the City of Boston had 2,944 full-time law enforcement employees. 2,140 of these employees were officers and the other 804 were civilians.<sup>20</sup>
- New England HIDTA Task Forces found in Boston:<sup>21</sup>
  - New England HIDTA Financial Task Force: This task force, led by the U.S. Customs Service is staffed with Customs and IRS Special Agents, as well as officers from the Massachusetts State Police and the Boston Police Department. This task force works to identify, investigate, and prosecute large-scale drug money laundering organizations in the area.
  - Greater Boston Task Force: Led by the FBI, this task force targets mid- to upper-level criminal organizations in the Greater Boston area.

## Courts<sup>22</sup>

- As of March 2000, there were 2 drug courts in Boston. One drug court was in South Boston, and the other was in East Boston.

## Treatment<sup>23</sup>

- Males accounted for 77% of the drug users admitted into treatment with marijuana being the drug of choice.

Percent of Drug Users Admitted into Treatment, by Sex and Drug Type, FY 1998

Gender	Cocaine/Crack	Heroin/Morphine	Marijuana
Male	62	70	77
Female	38	30	23

- 56% of the people admitted into treatment with cocaine as their primary drug of choice was African American.

Drug Users Admitted into Treatment, by Race/Ethnicity and Primary Drug, FY 1998

Race/Ethnicity	Cocaine (%)	Heroin (%)	Marijuana (%)
White	33	52	42
African American	56	19	40
Hispanic	8	23	15
Other	3	6	3

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau Web site: <http://www.census.gov>

<sup>2</sup> Massachusetts State web site: <http://www.piperinfo.com/state/slma.html>

<sup>3</sup> New England HIDTA Web site: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/enforce/hidta/ne-fs.html>

<sup>4</sup> Boston Weed and Seed Web site: <http://www.weedseed.org/siteinfo1.asp?ID=36>

<sup>5</sup> City of Boston Police Department, March 2000 Crime Statistics:

<http://www.ci.boston.ma.us/police/mar00.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Preliminary Annual Uniform Crime Report, 1999*:

<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/prelim99.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Community Epidemiology Work Group, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse, Volume I: Proceedings of the Community Epidemiology Work Group*, June 1999

<sup>8</sup> Community Epidemiology Work Group, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse*, January 1999,

<http://www.cdmgroup.com/cewg>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Community Epidemiology Work Group, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse, Volume I: Proceedings of the Community Epidemiology Work Group*, June 1999

<sup>11</sup> Community Epidemiology Work Group, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse*, January 1999,

<http://www.cdmgroup.com/cewg>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Community Epidemiology Work Group, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse, Volume I: Proceedings of the Community Epidemiology Work Group*, June 1999

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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- <sup>16</sup> Executive Office of the President, ONDCP, *Pulse Check: Trends in Drug Abuse January-June 1998*, Winter 1998, <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/pulsechk/winter98/contents.html>
- <sup>17</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 1999*, June 2000: <ftp://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Publications/mmwr/ss/ss4905.pdf>
- <sup>18</sup> Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Mid-Year 1999 Preliminary Emergency Department Data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network*, March 2000: [http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/DAWN/DawnMidYr/99mid\\_year.pdf](http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/DAWN/DawnMidYr/99mid_year.pdf)
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- <sup>20</sup> FBI, *Uniform Crime Reports, 1998*: <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/98cius.htm>
- <sup>21</sup> New England HIDTA Web site: <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/enforce/hidta/ne-fs.html>
- <sup>22</sup> Office of Justice Programs Drug Court Clearinghouse and Technical Assistance Project, *Summary of Drug Court Activity by State and County*, March 31, 2000
- <sup>23</sup> Community Epidemiology Work Group, *Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse*, January 1999, <http://www.cdmgroup.com/cewg>

This State Profile was prepared by the ONDCP Drug Policy Information Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse is funded by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and is a component of the [National Criminal Justice Reference Service](#) For further information concerning the contents of this profile or other drug policy issues contact:

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